

“My Gentle Strength”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter I - Of Wielders and Wellsprings

The world of Holst was a wild and untamed land full of dangers from the skies, the land and the seas. The only protection the people had were the ones called Wielders, those few men born with the talent to wield the magic of the land to protect and shelter. Wielders were always men, in the history of Holst, not a record existed of a woman being born a wielder. Wielders could use the energy in the land to shape magic and battle the beasts and natural dangers that threatened the land and its people. A Wielder could use any source of natural power to manipulate magic to protect the people of Holst. A Wielder was the most revered profession in the land and all Wielder's were highly respected and given rest, food and lodging in any village he chose to protect, even if they never stayed long and had wandering feet while young and unmated and looking for his perfect Wellspring of power.

A Wielder became even stronger when his Wellspring was found. A Wellspring could be either gender but was usually always a woman and they naturally and instinctually were born capable of drawing out energy from the land, collecting it like a pool within them from which their Wielder would drink. A Wielder and Wellspring pair would always be drawn to each other and more often than not, once they connected together as a pair, would never part from each other. Love was a foundation that made stronger bonds between a Wielder and his Wellspring.

It also was quite genetically common for a Wielder to be highly possessive of his Wellspring. Once he found, connected and mated to his match a Wielder was likely to kill a man over just looking at his Wellspring. It was a side effect of their deeper bonding of power. Once a Wielder supped from a matched Wellspring, he was a man possessed and would never lose the desire to drink of the power his match fed to him. It was more addictive than a drug and more potent than an aphrodisiac.

Male Wellsprings were rare and it was even rarer they bonded permanently to their Wielder. Male Wellsprings were often kept at hand just as an extra source of power in emergencies from which many Wielders could drink from simultaneously during battle. Male Wellsprings often died young, drained of power and used until the breaking point. It was accepted truth and it was the norm that a male wellspring was kept apart from others in his village, knowing that his duties were to the people and the land and not to himself. They did not socially interact; they were objects and tools and made no familial attachments. Knowing their fates were short lived and the fewer people to love him, the fewer would be hurt when he died.

After all, Wielders were always male and the Wellspring he was fated to partner with in life would be more than a source and bolster of his power, but a mate to bear his children and keep his bed warm at night. Very few Wielders would choose a male to be his Wellspring and certainly no children could be bred from such a pairing. It was imperative that Wielders and Wellsprings passed on their powers to their offspring; it was a hereditary trait that needed to be carried on for survival.

Male Wellsprings being the exception, they were not encouraged and in fact forbidden to mate. They were a genetic anomaly and it was not a desirable trait to be passed on to children. If a Wielder's son was born as a Wellspring and not a Wielder he was immediately given to the temple to be raised apart, severed from his family at birth. It was an insult to the Wielder's pride to have a son that did not have his gifts and rather than get attached to a child that would die before the parents, the parents gave him to the temple scholars to be raised and taught his duties to the people.

He was village and public property, he was less than a man, he was simply a village commodity, a source of power for wandering Wielder's to use at will and drain dry.

It was the way of Holst for centuries and not to be questioned but to be accepted.

Obie sat on his little cot reading a well worn book and watching the sun set out his window while he rested. He was very tired, the day before a horrible spore storm had blown in and the vicious arachnid-like spores had begun attacking the wheat fields and taking root quickly and destroying the harvest like carnivorous weeds of destruction.

Four Wielders were in the town of Garth three of them mated to Wellsprings and one widowed and all of them had drawn additional power from him during the battle.

He felt exhausted and raped of power. The oldest Wielder had a heavy hand when supping from his stores and Obie didn't wonder why he was widowed. His poor Wellspring wife must have suffered years of his brutal snatching of power.

Every pore ached on his young frame. Almost a strong Seventeen years and even his youthful strength had been brutalized severely by that man, even at a distance. Obie didn't want to think what giving that man power would feel like had they been skin to skin contact.

Not that Obie knew what that sort of power transfer felt like. He was a male wellspring; he usually stayed in the temple and just climbed to the tower roof during emergency battles. A convenient true north point grounded on earth and stone. Easy access for any Wielder within the vicinity.

The only human contact he had was from silent monks who fed him and sheltered him and gave him books to read to pass the lonely hours of solitude.

The only time the monks had ever spoken to him was in his very early youth and only long enough to teach him how to read and to impress upon him how he was not a person, he was property and that he should never think of himself as a man and do as he was ordered by the Wielder's. Once he'd learned, they returned to their vows of silence and left Obie alone and separated from others to read on his own out of the library.

He read the laws, that also decreed he was property of his birth village unless a Wielder matched him as a bonded Wellspring and then he became the property of his Wielder. He was to obey all Wielders if he was un-paired and if he did pair, his bonded Wielder's orders were his law.

In other words, his life was never his own, his desires null and void, he should have no wants, no desires, no wishes, no property, no choice. He should be grateful to be born to protect until he died, he should be honored that he was able to give to the people his very existence.

The books never mentioned how much it hurt not to feel loved. How much it ached in his chest to know no one knew his name or even cared he had feelings. They knew he existed, they expected him to give until he expired, but no one thought to give him so much as a smile or a prayer at night in thanks. Even the Wielder's that had used him, severed connection without so much as a touch of gratitude.

He could feel their emotions; all Wellsprings could feel Wielders when being used. They could all speak telepathically. None of them even asked his name, just tapped into his strength, used him and then left him cold and alone again.

"A bloody occasional 'thank you' would be nice. Maybe even a 'Hello stranger, I'm about to fry you from the inside out' once in a while. Is that so much to ask for?" Obie asked the Gods in the sky who also remained utterly silent in response.

He sighed as he closed his book and winced as he stood and walked on skin that was painful to the touch after the battle. He felt cooked alive from the power as he walked across his room and down the stairs to the kitchen.

Where he made his own meals and ate alone. He never shared in what the monks ate, they never offered aide when he was suffering after a battle and if he was going to eat, he'd have to endure the over sensitized pain of his body and cook himself.

There had ever only been one person in his life that showed him any care or affection. That was Old Father Andorn. The aged scholar had raised him, tucked him in at night when he was afraid as a boy, taught him to read, patted him on the head when he learned and took care of him after a battle.

However, Father Andorn was gone, he was on a mission for the temple. He was taking a sojourn to the Capitol City of Pernath to visit the libraries of the main temples. He had promised to bring Obie back a new book when he returned.

Obie didn't care about the book, he just wanted Andorn back, he missed the old man terribly. He was the father Obie had never known. Andorn had been gone over half a year already, and Obie was dismayed at ever seeing the aged man again. He feared Andorn's joints would fail him and he'd never make the return journey.

Obie sighed with melancholy as he ate a hunk of dark rye bread and butter and washed it down with a glass of amber ale the monks made. He was too tired to fix anything more substantial.

He ate as he climbed the stairs and fell back into his small bed to rest some more. His sandy mid-length and longish blond hair mussed and uncombed spilled over his pillow and his eyelids shut over jade green and tired eyes. He was quite a beautiful youth, fair of face, skin and feature. Deceptively delicate in appearance but powerful internally. Strength of soul that gave him little comfort.

There were no tears, Obie was far passed shedding tears now, he was cold emotionally and tears never brought him ease anyway. He just rolled into a ball and slept, praying for Andorn's safe return.

"Really father, allow me." Wielder Goh said taking the reigns of the small cart. He was a young man of twenty and one, his tall, thin and sturdy frame sat amused beside the old man in cart.

"Master Goh, I am not so old as you treat me lad."

"And not so young as you treat me Father. Let me drive the foul ox, he's being stubborn and your joints are aching. The least I can offer for the ride since losing my horse is to drive." Goh winked and Andorn handed him the reigns.

“I’ll not argue lad. My joints are not what they used to be. I’d be much obliged.” Andorn smiled and settled back to let Goh drive.

He’d met the young Wielder by chance at an Inn a few weeks prior and had instantly liked the handsome youth. He was unlike most Wielders. Granted he had a natural arrogance about him, but he wasn’t so arrogant as to make him stand-offish and rude. He was just arrogant enough to exude confidence and charm. He had a disarming and engaging smile and was as prone to burst into song as he was to ignite a were-beast into flames.

He was an exceedingly powerful Wielder, and even unmatched to a Wellspring he was manipulating power as if he was bonded to ten wellsprings in a harem of a power source. Goh’s reputation also preceded him, Andorn had heard of the incredible youth’s talents long before he’d ever met the man.

Andorn had expected an outrageously arrogant and vile tempered man as most Wielders with such awesome strength were. Goh however was just the opposite. He was exceedingly friendly and amiable. Almost to the point of being gregarious with good natured affection for people.

It was almost impossible not to like the lad because he genuinely cared for the people he protected. He never let his power go to his ego, even if he had a strong pride and ego well in tact, he was never demonstrative about it, preferring to laugh and play with children rather than tout his many great deeds.

Most curious however was his lack of a wellspring mate when he was at his prime age of finding his match. At sixteen most were already paired and by eighteen already having children together. Goh was a score and one and still alone. No matter where Goh went, every unmated female wellspring flocked to his side, even as young as fourteen parents were thrusting their daughters at him in hope of such a good match. He never even looked long at them let alone used any of them for power. When Father Andorn asked about it, Goh only smiled and winked and said he’d know his Wellspring when he found his Dream.

Andorn asked what that meant but Goh refused to elaborate and changed the subject.

Another curiosity of Goh was his secretive nights. As most unmated Wielders he had his pick of bedfellows and Goh would vanish nightly, smelling of sex the next day but no occupant was left in his bed the following morning.

Andorn had raised a curious eyebrow that morning when the stable hand youth looked forlornly at Goh as they headed out again from the Inn. A handsome lad of about seventeen with blond hair and green eyes and Goh had winked at him with a grin and tossed him a rose as the cart headed out.

Goh's sable dark hair was being tossed in the light breeze and his brilliant stormy grey hued eyes held a merry twinkle while he was whistling a jaunty tune as the cart ambled along the rutted road. Andorn studied the handsome profile silently when it suddenly dawned on him just why Goh practically refused females and why he never reacted to buxom wenches in taverns or inns and disappeared nightly circumspect about his trysting.

"I think I have you figured out at last lad." Andorn said with a chuckle and Goh turned and cocked an eyebrow.

"Do you now? That would be a first." Goh chuckled and Andorn smiled.

"Like them blond and green eyed and pretty on the eyes lad?"

"Oh ho. You are astute old man. Aye."

"And male."

"Aye again you old badger. Don't go spreading that one around, like women to feed me I do. They are less apt to spare my belly if they know I wish not to bed them." Goh winked and Andorn smiled.

"You'd save yourself the ritualistic parade of Wellsprings however."

"There is that. That does get rather troublesome. It's getting harder and harder to ignore without having to blurt out to their father's I'm not a breeder Wielder and they are as like to get a child out of me as out of a stone." Goh chuckled sardonically.

"Lad, it is a good thing you are coming to Garth with me then."

"Why is that Father?"

"I think your dream is there, waiting for you." Father Andorn smiled and Goh pulled back hard on the reins and shifted in his seat.

"Talk Old man! What do you mean?"

"I mean I think fate lead me to you lad. You, I think, are the answer to my prayers." Andorn said and Goh cocked an eyebrow and remained silent.

"For years I have cared for someone I love as if he were my own son and it kills me to see him trapped in the temple alone and suffering his cruel fate."

"A male Wellspring? You care for one? They are most rare."

“Aye. He is just as lovely inside as he is outside and dying in soul. Our laws forbid him simple pleasures and I ache for him and am powerless to free him. These past sixteen, almost seventeen years he’s been a prisoner of our temple, used and abused by every Wielder in the region. It breaks my heart to see him drained to exhaustion without so much as a greeting or thank you from the men who take from him and the people who expect him to die for them without reward.”

“I have never liked those laws. I agree with you on that Father. It is most cruel how my ilk treat male wellsprings like cattle to the slaughter. Do tell me more, I beg you.”

“I speak the truth when I say he is a vision to look upon. You I think will find him most pleasing to the eyes. I would have little doubt if you described to me your dream you would be describing my Obie.”

“I’ve had my dream since I was twelve. He has long and dark blond hair, jade green eyes. He’s fairer than a lass, has a delicate frame and a small beauty spot mole under his left eye.”

“I knew it, even the mole is accurate. Obie is everything and more you just described.”

Goh smiled brighter than even Andorn thought he was capable. “Father, hold on. I am driving this cart as fast as she’ll go until we reach Garth!” Goh cheered and snapped the reins to get the ox started again and indeed didn’t let the animal rest until they reached Garth at twilight.

However, they also reached it in the same moment a pack of were-cats rushed the small country village and Goh leapt out of the cart his powers flaring to life. He felt a presence nearby of immense power and was drawn to it like a moth to flame.

An unmatched wellspring was near and it even tasted male on his senses. Goh reached for the power and brushed against it, it was warm like a summer afternoon and rich as honey. It was orgasmic on his senses and as he touched the power it shivered in reaction to his touch.

::Might I drink from you beloved?:: Goh asked and felt shock in return.

::A-aye Master. You ask first?:: Came the confused reply.

::Any Wielder who would take without asking is a barbarian and I beg forgiveness if you have been misused.:: Goh replied as he connected to the lad and nearly fainted at the rush of sensation and power in his core.

He felt a returned sensation of shock as they connected and Goh smiled, he didn't need to see the lad, he knew the moment they connected this was his Wellspring. They meshed almost too perfectly.

Goh felt a brutal attack on their connection and growled and sent a stinging warning flare out to the Wielder trying to tap into the bond, the harsh hand of the Elder Wielder trying to take the Wellspring's power was bitten back by a much stronger and younger Wielder, Goh.

::You foul beast! Never grasp at power like that you monster! You'll hurt him!::
Goh reprimanded as he fought.

::It's a public wellspring!::

::He's a human being! No longer public, he's MY Wellspring! Touch him again and I'll kill you too! Use the land old man! There's a fountain of power here to sup from, my Wellspring has charged the area with his presence! You need not have to connect directly and you never had to! It's just easier to tap the source you lazy Wielder!:: Goh spat back mentally and Obie shook where he stood, not believing the conversation he was hearing in his head as he felt the stranger wrap around him like a magical shield, protecting him from the brutal Widowed Wielder Pandar.

When the stranger had connected to him Obie's knees had gone weak, and indeed there was only the connection, the stranger wasn't drawing power out of him, but reading his power source and then taking residual excess power from around him. His gentle touch and tender care not to use the power source but drink from the already collected pools of power in the area was like a breath of fresh air for Obie. A Wielder who also cared about the male behind the wellspring power was unheard of and Obie was positive he didn't just hear the stranger claim him as a bonded pair.

During a battle Obie always felt charred to a crisp, but not today, his skin was alive with power and the stranger was just collecting the power that was flowing out of Obie, like a kiss brushing against his senses every time the stranger came nearer to drink.

Obie felt the others reach for him and the stranger blocked their attempts to connect to him and use him instead of their wives.

::Use your own damned Wellsprings! They're only little were-cats! Stop abusing him! You all make me sick!:: Goh spat mentally each time a Wielder came too close to Obie.

Soon all Obie felt around him was the stranger's gentle warmth and strength and Obie reached for it blindly and felt it accepted.

::I don't need so much power beloved, But thank you dearest. You'll make me drunk with power you are quite potent my love. You have the whole land for miles charged with power. You are quite a strong Wellspring indeed my love.::

::Who are you Master?::

::My name is Goh dearest, you never need call me Master. Not you.::

::You're really claiming me?::

Goh chuckled at the question mixed with unmitigated hope. ::Aye. You feel our bond too I hope. This is unmistakable, we are matched well dearest, no other Wielder will ever use or hurt you again, I will not allow it.:: Goh replied as the last Were-cat fell and he turned and raced to the temple. He had to see the youth he was bonded to, had to see the power that filled him so completely.

Goh took the stairs leading to the tower two and three at a time and threw open the door leading to the roof.

Standing there, dressed in only his night shirt was perhaps the most beautiful creature Goh had ever laid eyes on. Andorn had not lied, Obie was a vision of beauty and indeed his dream in the flesh. He'd seen Obie in his dreams for nearly a decade, seeing him for real brought Goh to his spiritual knees and he raced over and crushed the youth in his arms and against his chest.

"Mine, you're mine and I won't let anyone hurt you again I swear it on my life!" Goh said into blond hair, Obie was shaking and clinging to his middle lost in euphoria.

"I'm dreaming and I will awake and weep I know it." Obie said, his light tenor shaking with fear.

"Nay, this is very real dearest. Dreamed of you most of my life I have. I have found you at last and am not apt to let go any time soon. You will not be a prisoner any longer, you will not be used or abused you have my vow. I will protect you always." Goh said and Obie turned his face up, his large jade eyes shimmering with tears of joy and his smile was brighter than the stars that twinkled in the night sky. He was free of his loneliness and torment, free from his cell and emotional and physical celibacy. He was born anew and trembled in his Wielder's arms.

"Goh, I vow I am yours always to give you strength my Wielder. I am so happy to belong to you." Obie said and Goh smiled and carded his fingers through Obie's hair.

“The law may say you belong to me Obie. But I would never be so bold as to state I own you. I will only ever state I love you, my Wellspring, and I belong as much to you as you do to me.” Goh said and Obie sobbed gut wrenching tears of joy and longing and Goh held him close as he purged years worth of pain and loneliness into a strong chest.

Andorn was standing at the top of the stairs smiling at the scene. “At last, my prayers are answered. Goh you are a gift from the Gods you are son. I know my Obie will ever be safe in your hands.” Andorn said and Goh nodded.

“Aye father. Thank you for bringing me to him, I will never be able to thank you enough.” Goh said holding Obie close and drinking in his presence like a man bereft of feeling for far too long.

“You thank me son, by loving him as I do. Come, you both need to eat now, power use makes both a Wielder and a Wellspring hungry.” Andorn said and turned to head down the stairs. Goh took Obie’s hand and squeezed.

“He’s right dearest. Food first, we can chatter and play all night after.” Goh winked and Obie blushed. He’d forgotten that part of being a bonded pair also meant being a lifetime bedmate to his Wielder. Goh chuckled.

“Have no fear Obie. We’ll take things one step at a time. I know perfectly well you’ve never been held let alone mated before and I have no intention of scaring you for life with shock. Only when you’re ready beloved and not a moment before. I detest our laws for male Wellsprings and I will be the last man on earth to bring you fear and pain. I will woo you properly damn it.” Goh said leading Obie down the stairs and into the kitchen.

Obie was shocked silent already with sensation and ate numbly as he stared shamelessly at his handsome young Wielder who just kept smiling at him and telling him to eat.

After their late supper, Obie lead Goh up the stairs to his sparse little room and Goh eyed the cell with distaste. The bed was barely large enough for Obie, let alone a pair and Goh had no intention of sleeping without his Wellspring close at hand, so he took the bedding off the bed and made them a pallet next to the fireplace. All the while Obie stood shyly off to the side watching, his eyes wide.

Especially when Goh undressed to his skin and crawled into the nest of blankets patting the space beside him. “Come beloved, lay with me here by the fire. I vow I will not hurt you. Come talk with me and let us just be close dearest. I need you near now that we’ve paired. I won’t be able to sleep if you’re not next to me beloved.”

Obie knew that was true, once bonded a Wielder always needed his Wellspring close and most could not even live if he lost his mate. A Wellspring was more than a source of power and a bedfellow, they were soul mates that fed off each other. Obie nodded and crawled into the pallet of blankets beside Goh and sighed as Goh wrapped him in strong arms and comfort. Kissing Obie's brow as he reached down and pulled Obie's nightshirt off him so they were naked together.

"I need to feel your skin Dearest, that's all." Goh reassured as he wrapped around Obie from behind and they spooned together in the nest of blankets.

Obie shivered as he felt Goh's manhood against the skin of his posterior. Alive and erect. "Goh..."

"I know, I won't Obie. I can't help but react to you, you are my husband as much as my Wellspring and our bond is very strong. I won't lie and say I can wait indefinitely, I will need to consummate our bond soon, but for now I am content to bask in your power my love. You are like touching golden sunshine to me, I feel warm all over just being near you. You are the strongest Wellspring I've ever been near, you could make a Wielder drunk just being in the same room with you beloved. I am thrilled you are mine Obie. I am happier than I have ever been to have you." Goh said kissing the back of Obie's neck making him shiver.

"Goh, I never dreamed of this, never dared hope. I pray I will be a good husband to you. I will try." Obie said and Goh chuckled.

"You couldn't be anything else Obie. Bonds are not accidents or chosen. They are fated and you chose me as much as I chose you. We connect because the gods wish it so. If we were not well matched when I reached for your power earlier we would have just shared an exchange of power and nothing more. You felt the power mesh as much as I did. We did more than share power, we mixed as one being, we couldn't do that of our own freewill even if we wanted to, power doesn't work like that. It just happens when it's meant to be, I was meant to be yours and you mine. It's as simple as that beloved." Goh said and Obie nodded, he knew that much from his studies too.

"I know, but still I'm male, I never expected to be bonded, ever."

"I know. Believe me I am glad you are male, you could not be mine if you were female. I cannot bed females, I am a non-breeder male."

"As I must me I suppose if we are matched. I tried never to think about it much." Obie said and Goh smiled into his back.

“Aye. You have to be dearest. It must have been very difficult here for you and for what it is worth I am sorry.”

“You didn’t write the laws of our land Goh.”

“I will endeavor to un-write them however. It is cruel and inhuman what you have endured. Together I hope we may shed light to the people who live in ignorance. If they know just how much you suffered, they will beg reform and eventually reform will come. My brother was, is... a male wellspring and I had to watch him suffer and have a fate worse than death and I am helpless to protect or save him. I cannot even acknowledge him as my little brother. That kills me, I wanted to see him so badly and I had to sneak in and sneak out. I was the only comfort he had before his accident which has left him this past year in a comatose sleep like the dead so I do know intimately how lonely you have been dearest. I will remove that pain from your gaze if it takes a lifetime.” Goh said and Obie rolled over and faced him, tears in his eyes again.

“My heart is already bursting with love of you Goh. Your pain is equal to mine it seems. Your heart is large indeed and I will protect it always.” Obie said and Goh smiled and leaned closer and eyes drifted closed as lips met in their first kiss.

Which was electric and left them both breathless in wonder as Goh leaned up from where he had Obie pinned beneath him, not even remembering rolling him into such a submissive state while they kissed. “That was powerful. Forgive me, your kiss alone it seems is enough to drive me mad with want of you.”

“Nothing to forgive. That was beautiful. You need never beg forgiveness for something so lovely to feel my Goh.” Obie smiled and Goh was lost in his eyes.

“So beautiful you are Obie. Will you let me love you? I will be gentle I vow.”

“Aye. I do not think you could ever be harsh my Goh. I am lost in your gentle strength I feel all around me. I feel alive and warm and I want nothing more than to be lost in you.” Obie sighed, his own sex equally erect where he lay beneath Goh.

Goh smiled and dripped kisses along a delicate collarbone and down a slender torso until Obie was gasping and mewling with denied sensations as Goh worshiped his neglected manhood with lips and tongue.

Obie’s fingers were clenched in the bedding as he arched into a warm mouth and came quickly. Goh expected as much from his sensitive and virginal lover. He would make sure Obie experienced pleasure upon pleasure before he dared make love to him.

He proceeded to toy and play with Obie's body until he was boneless with sensation, bringing him to a state of total trust and relaxation before he rolled Obie onto his stomach and used his tongue and fingers to toy with his objective.

Obie gasped and moaned as Goh's fingers probed and invaded and stretched and his tongue provided relief from pain with saliva as lubrication. "Goh! Oh Goh I will not last much more." Obie panted and Goh smiled.

"Not yet dearest. This time you will come with me." Goh said moving to his knees and pushing his own neglected erection home into welcoming confines.

Obie cried out loudly in a mix of pain and pleasure as Goh groaned with his own enjoyment of connecting their bodies as much as their powers had already connected.

A slow languid tempo began the summoning of the tempest. Obie was sobbing Goh's name with every thrust as the storm of love making grew into a hurricane of passion and Goh was equally vocal in calling out Obie's name as he shuddered in release and emptied his seed in rigid spasms of sinful orgasmic bliss. He'd never made love to a creature so ideally matched to his body and soul.

In one night, Obie had become the center of Goh's universe, his ultimate treasure and possession. He loved with a ferocity that rivaled obsession. The man, the body, the soul everything about Obie was perfection to Goh's senses.

This was no longer a fanciful dream, this was burning reality which made the dream pale in comparison.

Goh was sobbing his own joy as he clutched a quivering Obie in his arms as they came down off their sexual cloud of ecstasy and settled into a decidedly contented afterglow.

"I love you Obie. That was perfect."

"Oh Aye. Magical to feel you in me my Goh. I feel you burn inside my belly like a flame. I Love you so very much I want to cry again." Obie said and Goh kissed his sweaty brow.

"I will only ever allow tears of joy. Anyone who makes you cry again in pain will feel my anger. My Dearest One." Goh said through a yawn.

No more words were uttered as sleep claimed them both for the night and they lay warm and content by the dying fire, spent of energy but full of new love.

“My Gentle Strength”

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Chapter II - Of Finding Joy in Change

Father Andorn rubbed his temple, come dawn four Wielders stood in the temple. “Who is the greedy fool who blocked access to the Wellspring?” Pandar demanded and Andorn sighed.

“He had every right to block you from tapping into his Wellspring. You know the law Wielder Pandar. A Male Wellspring is only public property unless he is paired then he has the same rights as any Wellspring and he is the sole property of his bonded Wielder. I am not at liberty to divulge details further. This is a private matter between the Wielder and Wellspring pair and they are still resting after their physical pairing.” Andorn said and Pandar looked livid.

“LIES! I felt the Wielder’s power, he’s a man like the rest of us! He’d not bond to another male!” Pandar growled.

“I beg to differ sir. I am quite happily mated to my Wellspring and tired and your disturbance of the peace in the temple and power of the area has arrested my peaceful repose.” Goh said walking proudly into the room dressed in little more than a sheet.

“Young whelp, how dare you attack your elders!” Pandar hissed and Goh raised an eyebrow.

“How dare you refute my claim on my Wellspring Old Man. How dare you grasp and grab at power with such a heavy hand! I care not to think how often my love suffered under your brutal ineptitude! Were you never taught what it felt like to transfer power and how much it hurts if it is pulled from you by force rather than to be given freely? He was giving and you still grabbed more by force. You are a poor Wielder indeed if you take care not to hurt the Wellsprings who feed you power.” Goh reprimanded and Pandar turned red in the face.

“Insolent Cur! Just who the hell are you to insult me?” Pandar hissed and Goh nonchalantly sat on the edge of a long table and reached into a bowl of peaches and took a bite before answering.

“I have many names. King’s Own, Demonsbane, Wielder Bright Flame, but I prefer my own name. Goh.” Goh said and four pairs of eyes widened.

“You are not Lord Goh!” Pandar hissed and Goh smiled.

“But I am and I suggest you anger me not further Old Man or else I will mete out the King’s Justice on you. The power of the land here is now keyed to my hands

since my bonding to the source of the power. Abuse the gifts my Wellspring bestows on the land and I will seal your powers Old Man. Reach for him again and I shall not hesitate to kill you outright. Is that clear?" Goh said standing and grabbing a second peach from the bowl and turning back to the stairs.

"Excuse me. My Beloved is waking and he will feel distraught if I am not there with him. Good Day Gentlemen." Goh said turning and heading up the stairs again.

"That is not Lord Goh!" Pandar spat and Andorn shook his head.

"He is very much who he claims to be Wielder Pandar. Nephew to the King, Lord of Pernath Province, Wielder of the Highest Order and indeed now the sole owner of the Wellspring under this temple's protection. I have seen myself the power that man is capable of without being bonded. I can without a doubt state now that he is paired with a Wellspring he is perhaps the most powerful Wielder I have ever seen." Andorn said and Pandar snorted.

"Wielder Pandar, you should be overjoyed. You can now claim your son! Are you not joyful he will now live a longer life and have freedom from the temple now that he is paired? And such a remarkable pairing indeed, Lord Goh himself!" The youngest of the Wielder's asked and Pandar turned angry eyes at him.

"I have no son!" Pandar growled and stormed out.

"Leave it Wielder Jujain. Pandar is a foul tempered beast and having a son born a wellspring has always shamed him. It is why the lad suffered so much and why the mother is no longer with us. Pandar is brutal handed when angry and he never forgave his wellspring for giving birth to a male without Wielder powers and he never forgave the son for being born a Wellspring. He was their only child and Pandar turned quite violent after his birth. Poor Obeta was drained of power by her own mate's hands and Pandar would drain his son given the chance. Goh will more than likely have to live up to his threat and dispense justice. I pray he does actually. Pandar is mad." Wielder Rendrick said with a sigh. He'd lived in Garth the longest and had seen Pandar spiral out of control following the birth of his only son and male Wellspring.

Goh wasn't the only Wielder who detested the Law where male wellsprings were concerned. It destroyed Obeta to have her only child, one she'd wanted for years and almost killed herself to bear be ripped from her arms by her own mate and thrust into the temple. She became a shell of her former bright self and she suffered as much abuse from her Wielder after Obie's birth as Obie had after her Death. Pandar had destroyed his own mate and was destroying his son. Goh was a blessing to Garth and Rendrick prayed he stayed long enough to punish Pandar as he should be. Knowing the rumors of the Fair handed Lord Goh, Rendrick assumed from reputation Goh would not leave their village until it was

purified of hatred and justice was served. The Title of King's Own was only bestowed on the most truthful, powerful and lawful of Wielder's. Lord Goh was the only Wielder in history ever to receive the title so young and unpaired. His name was known the world over as peacekeeper and guardian of the people.

Knowing Obie was now safe and under Goh's protection brought relief to everyone save Pandar.

"Wielder Rendrick is Right Wielder Jujain. We must leave these matters to our Lord Goh to handle. He not only outranks us, it is his wellspring at the heart of matters here. Fair the Day father Andorn and please pass on our congratulations over the bonding." Wielder Furain said turning on his heels and heading out of the temple followed by his peers.

Andorn smiled, he knew those three were fine men and it was only Pandar Obie needed to fear. His own father was the cause of all his pain and Andorn thanked the gods again for bringing him across Goh's path and allowing him to guide Goh to Obie. He had heard them mate the night before and it did his old heart good to know that Obie at last had someone to love him as he deserved. Someone who would touch Obie's heart as well as his body. Goh was a miracle and Andorn prayed they would live a long life together and enjoy the love that had come into being the night before.

Obie was awake and was resting his chin on his knees sadly when Goh returned to the room. "My father was here." He said quietly as Goh crossed the room and sat beside him running concerned fingers through long blond hair.

"Your father? Which one dearest?" Goh asked softly wrapping around Obie and tucking his head under his chin.

"Wielder Pandar is my sire. I am his shame." Obie sighed and Goh frowned.

"Now his animosity makes much sense. Tell me more Obie please." Goh said handing the peach to Obie who just rolled it in his hands as he talked.

"I only know what Andorn has told me and what I felt from within these walls. I could not even tell you what my father looks like, only what he feels like on my senses. Andorn tells me my mother did not want to cast me into the temple and that she loved me much. I like to believe that, it made life here easier to bear. Andorn named me after her and from what I felt of her while she was still living I believe she did love me. During battles I can also feel other Wellsprings in the area, even before I came into my full growth. My Mother was very gentle and very warm on my senses when I felt her giving power to my father. Whenever her

power touched mine I felt her phantom kiss. I love my mother very much and I wish everyday I had been able to save her. I felt my father kill her.”

“What?” Goh gasped and Obie only nodded.

“My father is cruel Goh. He was angry with my mother for giving birth to an abomination and he used her ill for many years. I tried to feed her more power when I felt him ripping it out of her but he blocked me then. He used her until she was drained beyond healing. She died seven years ago during a spore tempest. He blasted her well wide open and the power consumed her and then he tried to do it to me and thankfully I survived but it took many weeks of care for Andorn to heal me. Since then I have been very powerful, my channels to the land are wide open and it is why I leak so much residual energy into node pools. I cannot contain it all, I have no containers within me anymore. My father destroyed them all and I am an open conduit to all power now.”

“That explains why I began feeling you within miles of here and why the land is so rich in power deposits, you continually feed power into them. You are a beacon of strength to Wielders. You must get horrible headaches dearest.”

“Occasionally, but if I purge the power into nodes I can alleviate the worst of aches. My heart aches more or it did until you came my Goh. I feel safe from him for the first time in my life. Having all this power within me and no means to wield it makes me feel very vulnerable. My Father exploited that for years and every battle I’d be left feeling charred to ashes. He has ever sought to punish me for being born a wellspring. He was very angry at you last night for blocking him from using me.” Obie said playing with the fuzz on his peach skin absently and Goh wrapped his larger hand around Obie’s and the fruit and smiled.

“He will never use you again beloved. No Wielder will ever use you directly. Even I don’t foresee even myself having to use you directly. You emit enough power indirectly to sustain ten wielders. Being near you is like sitting directly in sunshine you make my skin tingle just being in the same room and when I touch you like this I am charged and full and so very warm. It could be sub-zero in this room and I would never freeze or feel cold beside you beloved. If normal men could feel what Wielder’s feel there would never be cold in this world with you in it to light and warm the darkness.” Goh said kissing Obie’s temple.

“You make my heart ache Goh.” Obie sighed and Goh smiled.

“As you do mine beloved. I ache with need to protect you and give you comfort and return to you the warmth of soul you give me. And I shall start sunshine by telling you to stop fiddling with your breakfast and eat it.” Goh said lifting Obie’s hand that held the peach. Obie chuckled.

“Aye.” Obey said and obeyed and ate the fruit while Goh stood to dress and then opened Obie’s trunk at the foot of his cot.

“Rags they give you. Shameful indeed.” Goh muttered pulling out the least threadbare of garments. “Dress and then we are going out sunshine. I am getting you decent clothes and we must find temporarily lodgings. I wish not to spend another night on the floor with you and somehow it just feels wrong to be carnally active in a temple.” Goh grinned and Obie sputtered.

“Leave the temple?” Obie asked and Goh nodded.

“Aye sunshine. You are free and are my husband. My home is in Pernath and I am on a Journey to dispense the King’s Justice currently. Call it a tour of duty I guess. I am going village to village and sorting out injustices for my Uncle in addition to my Wielding duties to the Gods. I am a King’s Own Wielder and thankfully also nephew to our King which helps.”

“You’re nobility?” Obie asked and Goh laughed.

“Aye dearest. As are you now being bonded to me. You’ve gained more than a husband and Wielder dearest, you’ve sadly also gained a title. It can be troublesome but also a boon when needed to make things right again. I am Lord Goh, my Father is Duke Grantham of Pernath Province. My Uncle is King Gerdar. All of us Wielders and all of us hate the Male Wellspring laws and my Uncle wants evidence and proof so he can rewrite the laws. We all were heartbroken my brother Gandes had to live in the temple alone. We all tried to protect him and all failed. I will not fail with you and my love you are all the proof we need. The people will demand change when they see you love. However, one thing at a time. First we need to get you proper clothes, and a roof over our heads for the time being. Then I sort out the foul business brewing here and from here you and I will have a grand adventure I suspect. Ready to spread your wings and fly sunshine?” Goh asked and Obie smiled and dressed.

“With you as my wings Goh, I fear not falling only going too high and getting burned by the sun.”

“You are the sun dearest. Come then, let me spoil you today first. Our first bonding day should be filled with joy and not overshadowed by trifles and sorrows.” Goh said taking Obie’s hand tightly in his and leading Obie out of the temple gates for the first time in his life.

The square in front of the temple ground to a halt as people watched in awe as a Handsome young Wielder led a timid and beautiful Wellspring out of the temple.

Everyone knew there was a male wellspring living in the temple but no one had ever seen him. There were gasps and hushed mutterings and Obie shrank into Goh.

“Stand proud love.” Goh said as Wielder Rendrick came over with his Wellspring Fandie and they both bowed.

“Welcome to Garth Lord Goh. I am Rendrick and I beg forgiveness for Pandar. My Mate Fandie and I wish to offer our sincere congratulations on the bonding.” Rendrick said and Fandie smiled.

“Goodness me, you look like your mother you do. Obetta’s beauty was not lost in her only son. It does my heart joy to see her face again on you child and even greater joy to know her wish to see you paired and free has come to fruition. None of us wished you chained to such a cruel fate. Your mother loved you so very much.” Fandie said and Obie reached up to touch his face.

“I look like my mother?” He asked and Fandie smiled.

“Oh aye. You even have her beauty spot.” Fandie grinned and winked and Obie blushed but smiled. His heart soared knowing he looked like his beloved mother. Obie smiled and felt tears stinging his eyes again and Goh wrapped an arm around his shoulders and squeezed.

“My Obie is very beautiful, his mother must have been a vision truly. Pray can you show me where I might find a tailor in this market. I wish to spoil my Wellspring today on our first bonding day.” Goh said and Rendrick smiled and nodded.

“We would be honored to be your guides today Lord Goh. I know just the place follow me sir.” Rendrick said leading Goh and Obie through the marketplace. Fandie attached to Obie’s arm like a dear auntie bursting with joy and pointing out fanciful places Obie had only ever glimpsed out the temple windows.

“What smells so good?” Goh asked sniffing the air.

“I don’t know but it is making me drool.” Obie replied also smelling the air.

“It’s the baker’s booth. We had breakfast there this morning, he’s making cinnamon cakes. So very tasty.” Fandie said and Goh paused.

“Then lead there first please. My pallet is screaming for a taste and I am sure my Obie will delight in the treat. We had a meager breakfast and I am hungry as a were-beast at the moment.” Goh said changing direction with a purpose and practically dragging Obie along in his wake.

Obie eyed the baker's stall with unfettered wonder at the confections on display. He'd never eaten anything sweet beyond fruit in his life and everything looked and smelled heavenly to his virgin senses.

"See anything you want sunshine?" Goh asked and Obie smiled.

"Everything looks sinful. I know not what any of it tastes like. Choose for me?" Obie asked and Goh smiled and nodded and ordered two of the cinnamon cakes that had drawn them to the booth in the first place.

Goh watched Obie's face contort in almost orgasmic bliss as he savored every morsel of his small cake. Simple joys found in simple pleasures. Fandie was almost in tears beside Rendrick as they watched Obie much as Goh was, seeing him come alive with wonder over a simple cake. Hearts broke with pity knowing he'd been denied so long but also soared with joy knowing Obie would never be without again under Goh's love and care.

"I'd ask if you liked it, but I can plainly see you did dearest." Goh chuckled wiping crumbs off his own hands.

"Oh Aye! If you ever wish to make me feel spoiled my Goh. Give me that cake again. My word it was wonderful indeed." Obie almost sang throwing his arms around Goh's middle and squeezing in a joyful embrace.

Goh chuckled. "My sunshine is easy to please and it is still morning. We have more to see and do dearest. Let's first find a place to stay. Much easier to tote back shopping to a location than dragging it around with us trying to find a room." Goh said and Rendrick smiled.

"Have no fear on that matter Lord Goh. Fandie's Cousin owns the local boarding house and there is an apartment vacant that I'm sure can be all yours to use during your stay my Lord." Rendrick said and Goh smiled.

"My Thanks indeed. So now that the lodgings are sorted, let's get my fine mate clothes that do not show daylight through them." Goh said as the group once again set off through the marketplace.

Obie felt lighter than air as he walked the market square toward the clothier stalls and booths. He was blissfully unaware of anything other than his immediate surroundings full of dazzling cloth patterns and the chattering of Fandie as she held up color swatches to his face and Goh and Rendrick laughing over mundane conversation. He never noticed the stares and gawking faces or the hushed whispers being wrapped up in the attentions of Goh and Fandie.

His attention didn't return to the present until a harsh silence fell over the square and Goh's demeanor changed and Obie felt power wrap around him in a

protective shell and Goh loomed in front of him, blocking him from the street. Rendrick joining Goh at his side and Fandie's arm linked through Obie's her own wellspring of power alive with activity too and feeding it to her mate.

"Don't you worry honey. Your Wielder won't let him hurt you any more dear." Fandie whispered as Obie peered passed Goh's shoulder to see who was standing there.

"He should not be out here! The abomination belongs in the temple!" Pandar hissed and Goh fairly crackled with anger.

"Silence your tongue or I will silence it for you! My Wellspring has every freedom and right to be here as you do. I will hear no more filth from you sir. I told you this morning not to anger me. I will not give another warning. Your time is already short sir, the accusations against you far outweigh any perceived abnormality in my mate. From more than once source I hear you intentionally killed your own Wellspring and sought to kill mine. Those are weighty charges sir and if my investigations prove sound, your life is forfeit to the crown. I suggest you leave my presence for the time being or justice shall be served here and now." Goh said and Pandar laughed.

"Obetta was weak and spineless and died a pitiful excuse for a wellspring. It was that THING that brought her down not !! Defective as woman, could never carry a babe to term and when she did, it was that unholy creature! He consumed her soul like a beast, made her weak in bearing and shamed us all. It is my right to punish my wellspring for being a disobedient woman!"

"STOP YOU MONSTER! I FELT YOU KILL HER! FOR YEARS I FELT YOU BEAT HER AND RAPE HER OF POWER! YOU BLOCKED ME FROM HELPING HER! I WILL NOT HEAR YOU SPEAK ILL OF MY MOTHER!" Obie shouted in tears and Pandar's eyes widened.

"Silence Beast!"

"Nay I will not! The day you killed my mother you almost killed me. You were LAUGHING I heard you! You enjoyed it, you hated her as you hated me! She loved you, she loved me and you tortured her! Say all you wish against me, but do not ever accuse my mother of being anything but a saint of a woman! I won't stand for it! You never deserved her!" Obie was weeping and facing his father and bracing for a blow. He felt Goh take his hand and squeeze, a silent support.

"HOLD YOUR TONGUE BOY!" Pandar growled glowing white hot with rage.

"NO! No more! I will not be silent anymore! I am no longer cast aside to be used and hurt. I am free and I belong only to Goh. I will speak and be heard! I accuse you of the murder of Obetta and the attempted murder of myself. I was witness to

you blasting her well conduits open and making her bleed to death in soul with the rush of power that consumed her! I tried to heal her and you forced me away and ripped open my well too! It took weeks for the Monks and Father Andorn to heal me and when I did heal I was left a wide open wellspring! You only succeeded in making me more powerful, which you knew and used and abused for years!”

“SILENCE ANIMAL!” Pandar’s hand drew back and Fandie shrieked. It was Rendrick who threw the first blast that sent Pandar falling backward into a stall.

“TOUCH MY WELLSPRING AGAIN PANDAR AND I WILL KILL YOU!” Rendrick was furious and Obie was clinging to Fandie where she had crumpled in shock and feeding her his power.

“ENOUGH!” Goh shouted and he stalked over and grabbed Pandar by the front of his tunic. “You are under arrest for the crime of stealing another Wielder’s wellspring power by force. Witnessed by I, Lord Goh, King’s Own. You are also under arrest for the accusation of Murder of Wellspring Obetta and the attempted murder of Wellspring Obie. I have sealed you in a Wielding containment barrier, if you attempt to manipulate power you will feel excruciating pain. Someone get me the local constable!” Goh shouted and Jujain showed up looking wide eyed.

“Lord Goh. How may I be of service?” Jujain asked bowing.

“Lock him up until I decide what to do with him Constable Wielder. His crimes need due consideration.” Goh said looking stern and every inch a noble lord as he thrust Pandar into Jujain’s hands.

Pandar was shouting obscenities as Jujain physically dragged him toward his small jail.

“Fandie are you alright?” Goh asked and she nodded.

“Aye. Just more shocked than anything. It was like he reached in and grabbed my heart and squeezed. My Dear Obie, you put up with that for far too long dear.” She said as Rendrick held her close still looking furious and concerned.

“Aye. He always hurts when he takes. I am glad he just touched you a moment, the longer he hold the worse it feels.” Obie said taking her hand and kissing the back of it. Fandie couldn’t help but smile at gentle Obie.

“You’re deceptively delicate Obie. You may be as fey as your mother, but you have the spirit of a were-beast in you to stand up and face him like that. You are a formidable wellspring Obie. I’ve felt you for years, touching you I am in awe of your strength. You protected Fandie by feeding her your excess. I’ve never

known a Wellspring able to do that.” Rendrick said taking Obie’s hand in his in gratitude.

“You make me most proud to be your mate and Wielder beloved.” Goh said squatting beside the trio on the ground.

“I have learned that my Father cannot distinguish power from power. I often replaced my mother when she was growing too weak and he never noticed. I replaced what he tried taking from Fandie is all. Many times he tried robbing the others of power. I have protected Fandie many times before, I do it without thinking anymore.” Obie said simply and Three eyes looked at him in shock.

“What?” Rendrick was livid and Obie just nodded.

“Aye. During battles my Father often went after the nearest source. Fandie is the strongest of the women here and in battles where you and my Father were side by side he’d try to take from Fandie through you.”

“I bloody knew it! And could never prove it! That son of a were-beast I’ll kill him!” Rendrick spat and Obie reached out and took his hand.

“I never let him have her or the others. I was the strongest Wellspring, I just sent power into a node under you and my Father would always react to the strongest source, once he tasted my power he’d remember it was me he hated and used me instead. I would not let him do to another what he did to my mother.” Obie said and Rendrick reached out and hugged him tightly.

“How I wish you were my son! Thank you Obie, from the bottom of my heart thank you!” Rendrick said and Goh looked ready to burst with pride.

Fandie was in tears and replaced her husband as she crushed Obie against her chest. “I don’t care if you are not from my body. I don’t care if our blood is not the same. In my heart you will ever be my son Obie. I will love you as Obeta always wanted you to be loved and I will not take no for an answer you precious boy!” Fandie said weeping and kissing his fair cheeks.

The crowd in the market began clapping and cheering and Obie looked up stunned. Everyone was crying and smiling and looking at him not as a freak or a monster but finally as a man. He turned to see Goh’s tender smile.

“Beloved, you are a treasure. I am the luckiest Wielder alive to have such a gift given to me as my Wellspring. You humble me and make me most proud.” Goh said tenderly leaning forward to kiss Obie which only made the crowd cheer louder.

Obie was chuckling through tears at the ruckus and Goh let Obie use his sleeve to wipe his tears.

"I feel ten feet tall." Obie laughed and Goh grinned.

"At least you feel it, my short one." Goh teased mussing Obie's hair.

"You are just overly tall." Obie teased right back and Goh wrinkled his nose.

"What a comical sight we make then. Too short and too Tall. Come love, I want you out of rags and enough sorrow for one mid-day. He can do no more harm to anyone currently and he can wait until I'm in a better disposition to deal with him." Goh said offering everyone a hand up off the ground.

Suddenly clothing vendors were calling and squawking trying to get Lord Goh's attention. Each wanting to be the one to dress Obie in finery.

Fandie laughed hooking her arm through Obie's again as before. "Green Goh! You must buy him something green to match his eyes. He will look so handsome in that color." Fandie said and Goh grinned.

"Shall I let you shop for him Fandie? I am rather hopeless when it comes to fashion. My mother still dresses me actually." Goh chuckled and Fandie laughed.

"Men! You'd all walk around looking like something the cat puked on if we let you! Aye. Let mother's do the shopping!" Fandie grinned leading the way with Obie firmly in her grip. Rendrick and Goh following in her wake.

"He's utterly amazing Goh. I'm getting power buzz high just being near him, as his bonded you must be positively drunk on power. He's like standing in the fire he's white hot."

"He is rich on the senses Aye. I am most fortunate and grateful I am such a strong Wielder. We are matched well. Any one with lesser talents could not bond to him, he'd roast them alive with power. He is like tapping directly into the sun."

"I have no doubt of that Goh. Mind you don't get singed." Rendrick grinned and Goh laughed.

"My good man, I hope very much to be singed. He's perfect." Goh winked and Rendrick laughed.

"If it's not too personal, I've always been Curious how non-breeders went about meshing power. Fandie and I always end up with another babe to feed after." Rendrick laughed and Goh chuckled.

“Just the same as you Rendrick. Sans the babe making consequences afterward naturally.” Goh said and Rendrick looked confused.

“But how? I mean HOW do two men mate together?”

“Really man, you’re well old enough to be my father, it should be obvious how. He’s got only one place I can mate him that way.”

“Oh... OH! Oh dear, doesn’t that hurt him?” Rendrick shivered as the coin dropped and his eyes widened.

“Obie wasn’t complaining last night. No, it’s quite nice actually. Ask your Fandie sometime. She’s equipped that way too you realize.” Goh winked and Rendrick shook his head.

“By the Gods, Nay! She’d skin me alive I think. I’ve learned more than I wanted to know now, I’m sorry I asked.” Rendrick said and Goh chuckled. Breeders, especially provincially sequestered breeders without many non-breeders nearby always had a difficult time wrapping their minds around sex that did not involve a man and a woman. It gave Goh a sick thrill and amused him to see Rendrick ponder his new knowledge while they watched Fandie hold shirts up under Obie’s chin.

Goh’s purse was decidedly lighter and he felt good spending a small fortune on his now even handsomer Wellspring. Fandie was correct, green brought out all of Obie’s best features. The jade green vest over a cream colored shirt and matching jade trousers and soft dark brown boots made Goh hot under the collar.

Obie’s hair had been tied back with a jade green ribbon exposing his slender swan like neck and his cheeks were rosy from the sun. He was sinfully beautiful and making Goh anxious to be lost in a feather mattress with him.

They were sitting at an outdoor café, eating a wonderful lunch of a summer green salad in berry dressing, cucumber and cheese sandwiches, and cream tea to drink when Obie noticed Goh wasn’t eating and just staring at him.

“Goh love, are you not hungry?” Obie asked innocently and Goh grinned.

“Hungry? Aye. For Sandwiches, nay. You beloved are looking most edible.” Goh said and Obie blushed but smiled.

“Just eat you silly man. I am not going anywhere.” Obie replied tossing his napkin at Goh. Fandie chuckled, their new love and Goh’s obvious attraction to his wellspring and Obie’s natural shyness but equal attraction to his Wielder was amusing to watch. It reminded her of how Rendrick was when they were younger. She had been barely fifteen when the handsome seventeen year old

had come to her village. Come dawn she was his Wellspring-Wife and already plowed with their first child by the time he was finished mating her.

Rendrick had always been a passionate lover, she was blessed as his Wellspring. He always provided for her and their children and he always loved them with evident affection. They had seven daughters, all of them grown and mated to Wielder's. Their youngest Rendra had become Jujain's Wellspring-Wife two summers earlier.

Rendrick and Fandie also had two sons but sadly neither of them still living. Both had been Wielders and both sadly lost in battles far away from home. News hadn't reached them of the deaths until months later.

It was a joy that Jujain chose to stay in the village of Garth after he had come, a fresh faced boy of eighteen. He vowed not to take their last child away from Rendrick and Fandie like the other Wielder's had done with their other daughters.

He was like a son to them both and knowing they'd get to see their grandchildren grow up was a joy. Rendra was pregnant with her and Jujain's first child and the whole family was eagerly awaiting the arrival which would be soon, Rendra was due any day and Jujain looked a nervous wreck with anticipation.

Fandie and Rendrick lead Goh and Obie to the boarding house and bid them good afternoon after they were established in their apartments. Obie was fascinated by the bathing room and large featherbed. Neither of which he'd ever seen let alone used.

"Care to play with me Obie dearest?" Goh grinned as he shed his shirt and Obie cocked an eyebrow.

"Play?"

Goh laughed. "Ah mercy my Obie you are so delightfully naïve! Bed-sport my lovely. Or is one night of me loving you enough to put you off for life?"

"Oh! OH!" Obie grinned and walked over to wrap his arms around Goh's neck. "I am sorry. Aye, I ever want to 'play' with you. Last night will never be enough dear Goh. I have been wanting to 'play' with you most of today if truth be told. You are most handsome." Obie replied as Goh's hands began undoing his vest buttons.

"Really now. Has my little virgin developed an appetite already?"

"Oh Aye and no longer a virgin dearest. You already saw to that." Obie chuckled dancing away from Goh, his shirt half unbuttoned and slipping off his shoulder. Goh groaned, Obie was gorgeous and tempting him on purpose as he slowly unbuttoned his own shirt.

“You are testing my patience beloved. Do not tease me I’ll devour you.” Goh said undoing his breeches and letting them drop to the floor. Obie smiled almost feline feral.

“I am hoping so. You put this fire in my belly only you can put it out again love.” Obie replied letting his own garments fall to the floor making Goh shiver with the sight of him standing there naked and erect.

“By the gods you are breathtaking! Nothing so perfect is real, yet here you are.” Goh said waking over to pull the ribbon free and letting Obie’s hair cascade over his shoulders.

“I could say the same my Goh. Your eyes are like stormy skies and I could lose myself in them if you let me.”

“Then I shall always dearest.” Goh said picking up Obie and laying him in their bed. They loved each other most of the afternoon and only paused while Goh pulled on a robe to collect their food for supper. They ate in their room and loved again until sleep came once more and they held each other entwined in soft sheets and blankets in an even softer feather mattress.

Their little apartment was full of love and comfort as they slept peacefully in each other’s arms.

“My Gentle Strength”
A Wielder and Wellspring Story
Author: D. Sanders
Chapter III - The Truth Unveiled

Goh awoke and groaned at the sight before him. Obie was sitting at the small table in the apartment, absently eating a banana and reading a small book from off the corner shelf dressed in nothing more than a towel from his bath. Goh cracked his skull against the headboard accidentally when he fell back in a state of arousal jarring him out of his said state as he rubbed his head.

“Goh! Are you alright?” Obie asked concerned and Goh chuckled as he rubbed the back of his head.

“I’m fine. I just was not expecting to wake up to see you so indescribably irresistible. It’s my own fault for being too easily lured into heat. I have an over active imagination.” Goh chuckled and Obie frowned.

“I was just sitting there.”

“What is a banana shaped like?” Goh asked with a crooked and wicked grin as he wagged his eyebrows and Obie blushed and slapped his arm.

“Dog. I like bananas so just learn not to associate the fruit with your overly ripe loins you were-beast.”

“Can’t help it sunshine, learn not to be so pretty first thing in the morning.” Goh countered right back planting a kiss on Obie’s neck as he stood and stretched and headed into the bathroom himself. “And I’m overly ripe in other areas too. I’m going to take a bath myself.” Goh said disappearing into the bathroom and turning on taps to fill the tub.

He’d just crawled into the water when Obie came in smiling with a washcloth and brush. “Shall I wash your back for you?”

“That would be lovely, thank you.” Goh said with a sigh as Obie perched on the side of the tub and indeed scrubbed his back with the brush. It felt divine to feel the brush clean places only contortionists could reach on themselves.

“You have dry skin dearest. You are flaking badly. Did you sunburn recently?”

“Aye. About three weeks ago I fell asleep in the sun without my shirt on. You are getting rid of itches I’ve had for weeks. Don’t stop sunshine please.” Goh purred and Obie smiled.

"I shant. I know how peeling skin itches. Hand me that loofa sponge there, that will really help purge the last of your burn flakes." Obie said really scrubbing Goh's back fairly hard with the harsh porous sponge. Goh's back was bright red but he wasn't in pain considering how he was purring in bliss as Obie scrubbed. Obie smiled, it seemed Goh was equally easy to please if just a simple back wash had him melting into the water like iced cream in the heat.

"Sunshine you have magic hands, I haven't felt so relaxed in ages." Goh sighed as Obie moved to loofa the calluses on Goh's neglected feet.

"Good, and shame on you Goh. Look at your poor feet. Your boots are worn and too small they are giving you bunions."

"I'll buy new ones, don't scold me when I'm feeling so good sunshine." Goh grinned and Obie smiled.

"If I don't scold you as your Wellspring who will?" Obie said splashing Goh playfully who just grinned at him.

"Too true dearest. Point taken. The Gods know I can be a nag too sunshine." Goh said as Obie stood and tossed him the soap.

"I presume you are able to finish yourself?"

"You're not going to wash more?" Goh pouted and Obie winked.

"You'd never get out of the bath if I did. Play later, bath now." Obie said turning and heading out of the bathroom.

"Spoil sport!" Goh hollered after him and all he got in response was laughter. "Little tease. You'll get it later!"

Again all Goh received in response was bright laughter. Goh shook his head and finished washing. Obie was one of a kind and Goh's heart soared with affection again for his mate. However cruel he was to eat bananas so sweetly and then give a wash that further aroused his Wielder with a wonderful bath without completion.

"He's right, I'm such a horny were-beast." Goh chuckled to himself as he rinsed his hair and let the water out of the tub as he stood and dried off and joined Obie at the table over a breakfast of fruit and tea.

Goh pulled out his journal and quill and began making notes of what he wanted to record and what business he wanted to attend to that day as Obie curled up on the sofa with the book.

Goh was watching him when a thought suddenly arrested his attention. It was so simple he was furious he hadn't considered it before.

"I've got it!"

"Got what?" Obie asked and Goh got up and paced. His brain whirling.

"The answer. By the gods I cannot believe I didn't make the connection before!"

"What are you babbling about Goh?"

"Male Wellsprings. The Law. If I'm right, and I'd bet my last pittance I am. Those laws were not created to prevent you from breeding more male wellsprings! In fact I'd bet my whole estate that every last male wellspring is exactly like you!"

"Eh?"

"Think about it Obie, you're smart. Every Wielder is male. Not all of us are breeders. Non-breeders like myself couldn't bond to a female Wellspring if our lives depended on it! Hence it's nature at work here. There has to be male wellsprings to pair with non-breeder Wielders!"

"By the gods, you're right! Any non-paired female can give power to a wielder and they only pair with the ones they mesh with! Same as I."

"Precisely. However, somewhere along the line, someone deemed it an abomination for males to couple together or some other foolish nonsense! Locking away the male Wellsprings and turning them into public property and hiding them away so it was unlikely they'd meet their Wielder! This needs research. Just when were these laws written and by whom?"

"King Fenderack wrote them. His elder brother was the first Male Wellspring locked in the temple. I read this long ago. I wanted to know myself why I was considered less than human."

"Hardly dearest. King Fenderack was a bloody butcher! Wait a minute, there's an old ballad about Prince Perdain, he was Fenderack's brother. The song went that he was fey and that the people feared an heir apparent who would not produce and heir. Holy Were-beast balls that's it! They had to find an excuse to get him out of the line of succession!" Goh's shouted face was alive with sudden inspiration.

"So they denounce him as an anthemia, lock him away and then drain him like a public fountain and then over the years we all suffer the same fate just to justify a horrible act!" Obie countered joining Goh in his pacing.

“The Gods preserve me, the song also mentions Wielder Tarnack who rescued Prince Perdain by claiming him as a bonded pair. Tarnack was powerful and King’s Own. Perdain had to be released to his Wielder but became property subsequently which meant he lost all claim to any titles or lands. That’s where those laws come into play too. It’s why even women of rank who are wellspring if bonded to a poor Wielder lose all they have and the lands go to the next in line. Its corruption at it’s worst! These laws are a lingering blight of a monarchy long gone! I must write my uncle at once!” Goh said sitting back at the table and scribbling hurriedly.

“This could save Gandes! I know of three Non-breeder Wielder’s currently in Pernath of which I’m positive Gandes is meant to be paired with one of them! None of us can wake him, but I’d wager his bonded can reach him! Like you Gandes was blasted wide open and the shock sent him into a coma. He’s healed but he still sleeps.” Goh went on to say as he wrote quickly.

“Let those men into see him! By the Gods Goh, how many more Wielders and Wellsprings went unpaired because of this?”

“I shudder to think of it beloved.” Goh said writing furiously and then sealing the parchment and laying his hand on the paper it vanished.

“What did you do?” Obie gasped and Goh smiled.

“I can send objects places. I just sent that letter to my uncle’s desk. He’ll send us back a reply to acknowledge receipt after he reads it. They usually land on my head, my Uncle has horrible aim.” Goh said with a chuckle and Obie grinned.

“Or incredibly GOOD aim if he clocks your pate every time.”

“Ya know, you’re probably right there. Uncle has a wicked sense of humor.” Goh chuckled feeling pleased with his mornings revelations.

It was barley a quarter hour before Goh was rubbing his skull again and unrolling a parchment.

“Uncle says first to kiss you welcome and to thank you for inspiring my thoughts. He agrees and he is pulling out all the old records from Fenderack’s time to corroborate our theory. He’s also ordering Gandes to be brought to the palace so he can expose him to the non-breeder wielders. He’ll let us know if our theory there is also sound.” Goh said and Obie smiled.

“What is your brother like? I’m curious.”

“Gandes is a lot like you actually. He’d never hurt a fly if given the choice. He’s a bit younger than you. He’ll be sixteen in a few months. He wasn’t even fifteen yet

when the tempest blew in, it was bad. The largest spore swarm I've ever seen coupled with locusts the size of horses in from the wasteland. Every Wielder was run ragged and it was an accident Gandes was overused. No one intentionally meant to harm him, but a boy can only handle so many Wielders using him before he cracks. Father and I tried to shield him but we too were worn to a thread and we both felt him collapse. He's been sleeping ever since."

"What does he look like?" Obie asked and Goh smiled.

"Pretty he is. We all look like our mother, but he most of all. We all have the same dark brown hair and grey eyes like Mama. But Gandes is lovely, delicate like you."

"You have other siblings?"

"Aye. An older brother, thankfully a breeder is the heir apparent to my father's household. Gavain is crazy. You'll like him much. He's always smiling and telling filthy jokes. I'm the next, the middle child nightmare and then Gandes was the baby and it killed Mama and Father to have to give him to the temple. They tried to hide it and even Uncle kept quiet about it, he was a charming baby, never cried and never fussed. Someone however found out and reported it to the temple. By Law if the parents refused to hand over the child the Monks were forced to come and take him. Thankfully the monks were kind and turned blind eyes to the nine-year-old little boy who kept sneaking in to visit his three year old and terrified little brother. I'd sleep with him at night so he wouldn't be so scared. I was still sneaking in to see him right up until his accident, even if he didn't need me sleeping in the room anymore by that time, I knew he felt comforted when I did." Goh said and Obie leaned over and kissed him soundly.

"You are a dear, dear man Goh. Your heart is large and I daresay touched by the gods with kindness. I pray with all my soul your brother is saved and I may meet him one day and love him as you do."

"Ah Obie, my whole family will adore you. If you think Fandie is bad, you haven't met my mother yet. With as pretty as you are she'll have you festooned in finery like a peacock. My mother is very materialistic and she won't let you out of the house until you meet her approval."

"Did you leave the house much?" Obie grinned and Goh laughed.

"Only after several changes of clothes and a scolding or three." Goh winked as a second parchment just missed his head and landed in his lap.

Goh was weeping and just handed Obie the letter.

Dearest Goh,

You were right! Gandes stirs! That new young boy, Wielder Yidane nearly collapsed when he entered the room and we had to help him across the floor he was responding to Gandes immediately. He's gone into a power trance and he's bonded truly to Gandes and will not let any of us near him. He has the whole room shielded and we can only watch from beyond the barrier but Gandes is moving and showing signs of coming out of his coma. The gods be praised Goh you're right you saved him! If your speculations of Fenderack and Perdain prove sound and with this new revelation you can rest assured we'll get the council of lords to allow me to rescind the laws at last!

Lad I am going to kiss you myself when you get home and your Wellspring will just have to turn a blind eye for a moment. I'm sending the other two non-breeders out with haste. The temples keep records if they have male wellsprings and there are five we know of, which mean we have at least three Non-breeder Wielders out in the field we don't know about. I'm sending out word they are to go to the temples and see if they bond. If we can't rush through the law changes we can at least pair those boys to assure their freedom! Your dream was real and it seems the catalyst we needed!

I am filled with hope at last. I want you home soon so we can celebrate, your mission is deemed complete. I am so proud of you.

*Love,
Your Devoted Uncle*

P.S. Yes, I aim for your head. I'm pretty good I think. About time you caught on Goh.

Goh was laughing and crying as he spun Obie around the room where they toppled into bed dizzy and elated. "I hope I can wrap business up here quickly, I cannot wait to get home now. Both to show you off and to at last see Gandes happy. Yidane is a nice boy, he'd just come to the city before I left. He's from all the way from the Western Sea. He'd had enough of a fisherman's life and wanted to see the city. He's nineteen and full of spirit and can drink men twice his size under the table. The country breeds firm and stout men and he's damn near as strong as I am. No Wonder he's paired with Gandes, it takes a powerful Wielder to handle the sort of power Wellsprings blown open can generate."

"But love is the most important between pairs. I loved you the minute you touched me Goh. It was like the world suddenly grew bright and warm and there was nothing I wanted more than to be lost in you. I had no idea who you were only that you were suddenly to most important person in the world to me. Love makes the pair, power is secondary." Obie said nestling up under Goh's chin.

“Aye sunshine. I didn’t need to see you, I also knew the moment you filled me with power I was lost. Even if I did have dreams that showed me what you were going to look like, it was our initial bond that made me fall in love with the man and not the illusion in my head. Your pretty face is just a very, VERY nice bonus.”

“Like my face Goh?” Obie purred his hand tracing the muscles on Goh’s chest.

“Oh Aye.” Goh purred under Obie’s gentle hand.

“I’d be lying if I said I didn’t think my Wielder was also very nice on my eyes.”

“That’s nice to know sunshine. Oh that feels nice.” Goh sighed as Obie’s fingers made his skin tingle.

“You’re going to feel very nice in a moment my love.” Obie whispered in Goh’s ear making him shiver before he indeed made good on his statement and proceeded to make Goh feel very good with lips and tongue.

Obie’s gentle strength and tender hands brought out desires that Goh had no name for and only hunger and longing to possess.

It was well passed the lunch hour before Obie released Goh from his ministrations leaving his mate boneless with sated bliss. Obie had taken the lead for the first time in their lovemaking and proved he was quite a faster learner.

Goh was positive the sight of Obie straddling him and taking him into his body at his own tempo was the most erotic sight he’d ever seen. Obie was breathtaking and all his. Goh felt rather smug as he lay there beside his Wellspring. His gentle strength filling him with love and affection and his beautiful countenance was serene and content.

Obie was right. Power was secondary, love was what mattered and Goh finally knew what love was all about. He loved his parents, his brother, and his family. He’d had held affection for pretty lovers but all of them paled to the ferocity of love that swelled in his chest as he watched Obie sleep.

His Wellspring, His husband, his lover, his soul. Nothing compared to Obie. “My gentle Strength, my Heart, My sunshine.” Goh whispered into blond hair as he settled down to doze again himself.

The next week saw Goh sitting day in and day out in the village courthouse hearing grievances and settling disputes while collecting evidence against Pandar and hearing what everyone had to say on the matter.

Obie was ever at his side taking notes for him with his immaculate concise script, fetching water and food for Goh and just making himself indispensable as a partner and wellspring. Obie took to his role like a fish to water, Goh mused more than once Obie was perfectly designed to be a King's Own Wellspring. He was smart, quiet, and extremely efficient and knew before Goh did when he was getting thirsty or hungry or needed a break. His confidential observations passed discreetly to Goh on notes during sessions and on a few occasions just little love notes to bring Goh out of a foul mood.

At night Obie was there to massage sore shoulders from tension, to talk out problems and concerns with and to just listen when Goh needed to vent frustration. Their bed was always the nicest end to the day where they would love and reaffirm their bond and Goh would not only recharge his power stores by loving his Wellspring he'd give his soul cleansing with their love.

"What did I do without you before Obie?"

"Suffered headaches?" Obie grinned as he lounged on their bed looking ruffled and gorgeous.

"I'm serious Obie. I depend on you more than you know now. I cannot believe I've been doing this job four years without you without exploding from stress. I couldn't do it without you now. You are a treasure." Goh said resting his head in Obie's lap and Obie finger combed his hair.

"I am your wellspring dearest. I can't be anything other than your support. When we bonded we fell into a very good tune. I can read you like a book. Wielders have many weights on their shoulders, I am here to make sure they stay balanced and you do not suffer. I love you."

"I love you too sunshine. By the gods I now understand why bonded Wielders fawn all over their wellsprings. You make us whole."

"As you complete our needs dearest. I have but one desire, to be loved. You show me that constantly Goh. I ever feel needed and that pleases me so very much."

"Sunshine, I do need you. Thank you for taking care of me."

"You are most welcome my love. Thank you for loving me."

Goh only smiled and reached up to lay a hand on Obie's cheek. "Forever." He said softly as he yawned.

“Go to sleep love. Tomorrow is a big day.” Obie said and Goh nodded and moved off Obie’s lap onto his side of the bed. Obie curled up beside Goh and as usual did not fall asleep until he was sure Goh was already well into repose and resting peacefully.

The following day Pandar was brought into the courtroom and glared at Obie who sat quietly and serenely at Goh’s right side. He faced Pandar without facially betraying his emotions. He was a silent observer, calm, cool and confident in his role as King’s Own Wellspring. Goh sighed and stood.

“Wielder Pandar. The evidence against you is irrefutable. I have twenty and two signed affidavits confirming witness to years worth of abuse against Wellspring Obetta. I have sworn statements from Wielder Rendrick, Wellspring Fandie, Wielder Furain, Wellspring Limarys and King’s Own Wellspring Obie that you did willfully and maliciously force open Wellspring Obetta’s conduits causing mortal injury and her subsequent death seven years ago. You stand accused again of willfully and maliciously also forcing open King’s Own Wellspring Obie’s conduits which almost caused his own death when he was still but a child and was by law, not to be used as a full wellspring underage. Furthermore adding insult to injury with continued attempts at causing harm to King’s Own Wellspring Obie repeatedly since and attempted theft of Power from Wellspring Fandie, Wellspring Limarys, and Wellspring Rendra. How plead you?”

“I have nothing to say to you non-breeder cur!”

“So be it. By the power vested in me by King Gerdar as King’s Own Wielder I do hereby sentence you to exile. Your Wielding gifts will remain sealed and any attempt to manipulate power will cause you instant death. You shall be branded a traitor to your vows of the brotherhood of Wielding and your oaths to protect all life and land. You will be shunned and excommunicated from society. You are no better than the were-beasts who rape and curse our land. For you chose of your own freewill to become the beast who knows no better. Live and repent and may the gods have mercy on your pitiful soul.” Goh said and laid a hand on Pandar’s brow.

Pandar screeched in pain as Goh laid the sealing curse upon him and a brand appeared on his forehead. A single rune that denounced him as TRAITOR.

“Take him to the edge of the village and release him.” Goh said returning to his seat not looking happy and Obie took his hand under the table and squeezed.

::That was very difficult for you dearest I know.:: Obie’s mental voice comforted and Goh sighed.

::But had to be done. He’ll hurt no one again.:: Goh replied mentally as Pandar swore and shouted curses at everyone as he was lead out of the courthouse.

Obie stood. "My Lord Wielder needs a recess to purge the taint of the Sealing Spell from his soul. Please clear the courtroom immediately for one half of an hour." Obie ordered and the courtroom cleared of everyone but Obie and Goh.

Once the doors were closed Obie held Goh as he cried for a few minutes. He hated having to use the sealing spells that only King's Own Wielders were taught and were capable of using. They left a horrible bile in the back of his throat and Obie let him purge the pain and regain his composure before Court resumed again.

"Dearest, thank you." Goh said wiping his eyes and feeling better after a good cry.

"Thank me not my love. I could feel your soul torn in grief. Only a pure man would feel such pain from using such a spell. It is why only King's Own Wielders are able to use them at all. Because you don't want to use them. Your hearts are pure and forgiving."

"And yours isn't?"

"Not as yours no. Am I saddened by this judgment against my father? Yes. Do I think it was the right thing? Yes. Does it pain me? No, not like it pains you my love. I think very much he deserved what he received. I am not so unbiased as I appear. I feel vindicated and my mother may now rest in peace. I am only in pain over this because you are in pain my love. I'm not as pure hearted as you are."

"I'd disagree. I just think in this situation you are a little closer to the heart of the matter to be able to fully detach from it. Your heart is my strength. But let us agree to disagree." Goh smiled and Obie nodded.

"Aye. Feeling better now dearest?"

"Aye. You can bring them back in again."

Obie nodded and went to open the courtroom doors again.

By the end of a fortnight, Goh and Obie were bidding farewell to everyone as they purchased a pair of sturdy horses and filled saddlebags with travel rations. Obie lingered in the embrace he gave to Father Andorn, the only father he'd ever known and Andorn told him not to be a foolish boy and to let go of the old past and embrace his new future.

Obie promised to send letters from Pernath and Fandie cried as she hugged them both good-bye.

“You must come to the Capitol for a Visit sometime. You are ever welcome in our home.” Goh said shaking Rendrick’s hand.

“We just might at that! We haven’t had a good journey in twenty-years Fandie and I.” Rendrick grinned.

Goh smiled. “We do have wandering feet, it comes with the job.” Goh said turning to Jujain and Rendra who held their newborn son. A wellspring male.

“Goh, We can’t thank you enough for helping to rescind the Wellspring laws. My son means everything to me, Wellspring or Wielder. Knowing I don’t have to ever give him to the temple makes me joyful indeed. I love my son and I have you to thank I may hold him to my heart.” Jujain said and Goh smiled.

“That is what we did it for Jujain. No other male wellspring will ever suffer the fates my Obie and my brother did. He’s a boy like any other and he has a good father and mother I have no doubt he will make you proud.” Goh said and Jujain smiled.

“If he’s anything like my Rendra and Obie, I’m sure I will be!” Jujain said as he turned to see Obie holding the baby and cooing at him. Goh chuckled.

“That is if Obie will release the child long enough for us to be on our way!” Goh said and Obie laughed and handed the baby back to his mother.

“But he is so darling!” Obie laughed climbing into his saddle. “Wish me luck that I do not fall off this beastie!”

“I wish you an iron backside son! You’ll be needing it.” Rendrick called and Obie laughed.

“So Goh has warned me, I’ll survive I suppose. Farewell all! May the Gods be Gracious to you all!” Obie called as Goh swung up into his own saddle.

“Fair the Day and Gods blessings one and all!” Goh echoed as he and Obie headed out of the village on dapple gray geldings on the road headed for Pernath.

Goh was barely off his mount when he heard the call. “GOH! GOH!” Came the sweet musical tenor racing down the stairs of their estate. Goh’s heart soared as

Gandes came flying at him. His long dark hair braided down his back and dressed in slate blue silks.

“Gandes!” Goh cheered picking up his smaller brother in a firm embrace and swinging him around in circles laughing and crying for joy.

Yidane was chuckling as he walked down the stairs behind his Wellspring. “He’s been wound up like a top all day waiting for you to arrive. Welcome home Brother Goh.” Yidane said tucking Gandes under his arm lovingly and holding out his hand to Goh.

“A handshake? I think not! Come here brother!” Goh laughed pulling Yidane into an embrace. “Thank you for saving him.” Goh said with heartfelt love and Yidane just shook his head.

“Thank you for making it possible Goh. I have my love thanks to you.” Yidane said as Obie joined them and Gandes beamed.

“I am thrilled to finally meet you Gandes. Goh has told me so much of you.” Obie said and Gandes affectionately hugged Obie.

“Goh’s dream you are, every detail as he used to tell me. Brother Obie thank you for making my brother so happy.”

“I am the one who is happy.” Obie said as a female voice shrieked from the stairs and came racing down much as Gandes had. Goh’s mother was full of joyful kisses and hugs and praises as she smothered both Goh and Obie in affection.

“And where are hugs for father?” Bellowed a voice and once again Obie was swept away by gregarious affection that seemed an inherent family trait.

It was a whirlwind of welcome. Dinner was a celebration and everyone was laughing and singing and dancing. Goh’s parents, his Brother Gavin and his Wellspring Candys, Young Yidane and Gandes who couldn’t keep their hands off each other as they danced across the living room to the lively music provided by servants who also danced and sang and made merry. Even King Gerdar and his Wellspring Queen Amandine joined the party later on and Gerdar, Goh, Gavain, Yidane and Grantham sat around a table with rich stout and a deck of cards. The Wielders all swearing at each other as they played a not so friendly game of pairs and beasts. Obie and Gandes being of a close age quickly became fast friends and shared similar tales with each other as they shared sweet cherry liquor with Amandine and the other Wellsprings over a much friendlier game of charades.

The house was alive with familial joys and Obie fell into bed that night with Goh feeling as if he had indeed come home at last. He loved them all, especially the drunkard snoring in bed beside him. Not that Obie wasn’t going to wake up with a

hangover either as he pulled the covers up over them both, kissed his Wielder goodnight and then blew out the bedside table lamp for the night. Home at last.